



Helpful Travel Tips for Your International Trip

Traveling internationally can be an exciting adventure, but it's essential to plan and prepare adequately to ensure a smooth and enjoyable trip. Here are some helpful travel tips to help make the most of your trip.

BEFORE YOU GO

- **Check Passport Validity:** Ensure your passport is valid for at least six months beyond your planned return date.
- **Research Your Destinations:** Research each destination's weather forecast, cultural norms, and planned activities to pack accordingly.
- **Notify Your Bank:** Inform your bank and credit card companies of your travel plans, including the countries you'll be visiting and the dates of your trip. This prevents your accounts from being flagged for suspicious activity when using your cards abroad.
- **Stay Connected:** Arrange for international roaming with your mobile carrier or consider purchasing a local SIM card upon arrival. Download offline maps, translation apps, and travel guides to your mobile device.
- **Purchase Travel Insurance:** Be prepared for unexpected expenses that may pop up before or during your trip due to illness, injury, travel delays and more.
- **Consider Enrolling in the *Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (STEP)*:** Subscribe to get up-to-date safety and security information, and make it easier for the US State Department to reach you in the event of an emergency abroad. Enroll here: <https://step.state.gov/step/>
- **Take Photos and Make Copies of Essential Documents:** Take photos of your passport, driver's license, health insurance card, and back of your credit card and keep them in your phone AND send them to someone at home. Also, print out a copy of each of these and take them with you. In the event of theft or loss, someone back home will have a copy and in the event of a lost phone too, you'll have hard copies on hand to assist with replacing your lost documents.
- **Pack Lightly, But Smartly:** Aim to pack lightly whenever possible. Be mindful that in some areas cars may not be able to park immediately outside the front door of your hotel and you may be responsible for carrying your luggage a short distance. Additionally, cars tend to be smaller than we are used to here in the States and cargo and stowage capabilities may be limited. If traveling with someone, pack half of your clothes in each other's suitcase. That way in the event of delayed baggage, each of you has at least half of your clothes.
- **Exchange some currency:** While major credit cards are widely accepted in Europe, it's a good idea to carry some local currency for small purchases, transportation, and emergencies. Also, just in case your cards get flagged and it takes a day or two to sort things out, you'll have a little bit of cash on hand for essentials.
- **Make Sure Your Debit Card has a 4-digit PIN:** Many ATMs in Europe will not accept a PIN longer or shorter than 4 digits and most keypads don't have letters on them.

WHILE TRAVELING

- **Respect Local Customs:** Learn basic phrases in the local language, observe dress codes, and adhere to cultural norms. Be mindful of local etiquette when dining or interacting with locals. Avoid overly casual attire like tank tops and flip flops. Be aware that religious sites will likely require you to have knees and shoulders covered so you may wish to pack a shawl or scarf to cover up during the warmer months.
- **Be Mindful of Safety:** Stay vigilant and aware of your surroundings, especially in crowded tourist areas, public transportation, and nightlife districts. Keep valuables secure in anti-theft bags or money belts, and avoid displaying conspicuous signs of wealth. Beware of pickpockets and only purchase tours and tickets from reputable companies.
- **Only Withdraw Money from Bank-Owned ATMs:** Avoid “independent” ATMs, like Travelex, Euronet, Moneybox, Your Cash, Cardpoint and Cashzone, which will have high fees for accessing your cash. You’ll often find these next to bank ATMs in the hope that travelers will be confused and not notice the difference. Keep in mind that your daily withdrawal limit is based on US time.
- **Split up Your Money and Credit Cards:** Leave one where you’re staying and keep one with you. Or, if you don’t feel comfortable leaving one behind, split them up and carry them in separate places, like one in your bag and one in your shoe, etc.. In the event one is lost or stolen, you’ll have a second source of funding.
- **Utilize Calling Apps Like WhatsApp:** WhatsApp is widely used across Europe and other international destinations. Drivers, guides, and hotels will likely utilize this as the first point of contact when trying to reach you.
- **Use the Correct Dialing Format if You Need to Make a Local Call:** Use the correct country code, drop the leading zero (if calling from an international number), enter the local number including any area codes. Depending on your phone carrier and the specific international calling plan you have, you may need to enter certain prefixes before dialing the country code. This could include “+” or “011” before the country code.
- **Share The Fun!:** If you plan on sharing any photos on social media, feel free to tag me so I can follow along!
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